

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Sun Safe Choices Urged for Wyoming's Sunny Days

May 22 is "Don't Fry Day"

As Wyoming's summer filled with long, sunny days and great outdoor fun approaches, representatives of the Wyoming Department of Health are encouraging sun-safe behaviors to help prevent skin cancer.

Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer, said skin cancer is the most common of all cancers and the number of cases is rising. "More people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year than with breast, prostate, lung and colon cancer combined," he said.

"Unfortunately, many people don't realize that skin cancer can be terribly serious, even deadly," Sherard said. "The good news is that it is very preventable."

Jessica Perez, outreach specialist with the Wyoming Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, said it is estimated that one American dies every hour from skin cancer. "In 2006 there were 93 new cases of melanoma reported in Wyoming and 19 melanoma-related deaths," she said.

"The all-out best way to lessen your risk of developing skin cancer is simply to avoid too much exposure to the sun and other forms of ultraviolet (UV) light," Perez said. "When you're outside seek shade, and remember to use sunscreen and wear protective clothing, hats and sunglasses."

Perez continued, "Any change in your skin, whether burned or slightly tanned, is a sign of UV damage and shouldn't be ignored."

"Being sun safe is especially important in Wyoming because of our state's high elevations and generally sunny days," Perez said. "Not everyone knows that higher elevations lead to more UV exposure from sunlight."

Potential UV exposure from tanning salons should not be overlooked, Perez said. "Whether it's from the sun or from an artificial light source, ultraviolet radiation is a carcinogen," she explained.

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